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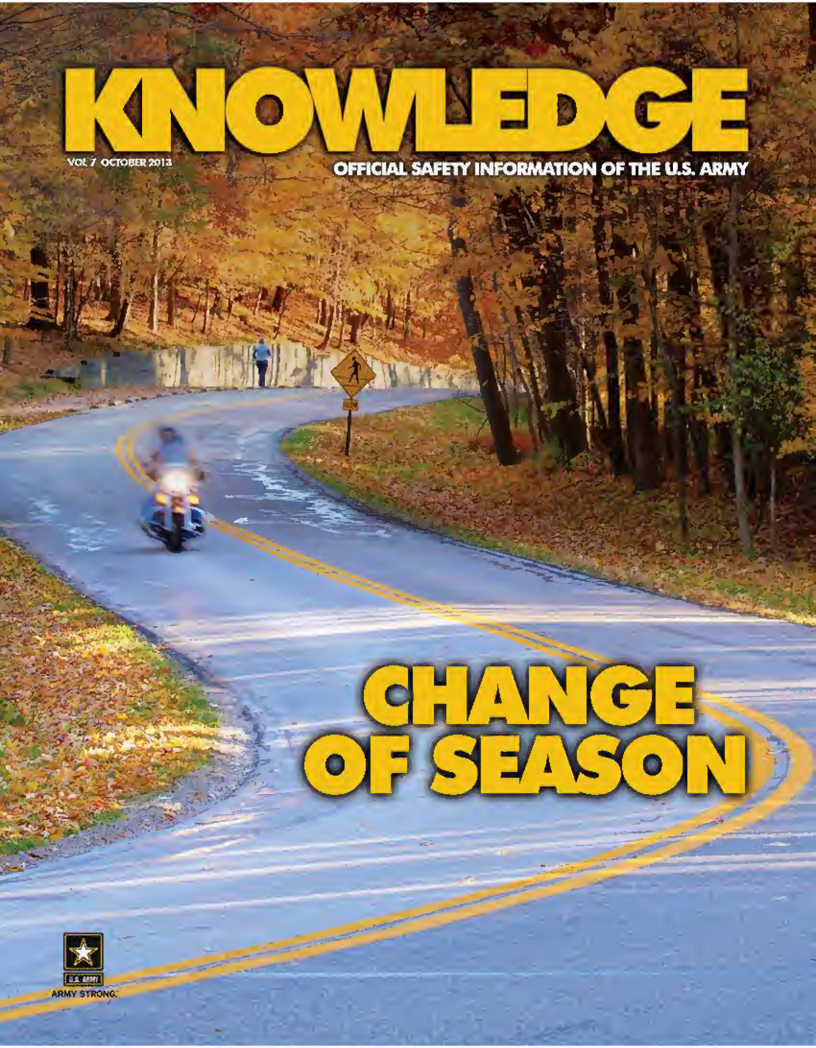

CHANGE OF SEASON

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FROM THE DASAF

2014: WHAT'S YOUR OBJECTIVE?

We just turned the page on another fiscal year, and preliminary numbers suggest it will be among our Army's best ever for safety. But no matter how fiscal 2013 shakes out, we must allow ourselves to go nowhere but forward into the new year, building upon our successes and paying heed to lessons learned along the way. The Army's annual safety and occupational health objectives, signed in early September by the secretary of the Army and Army chief of staff, provide a sound framework for you to do just that within your formations.

Fiscal 2014's objectives are straightforward: incorporating three specific goals into the unit's strategic plan, and working toward an Army-wide target of a minimum 10 percent reduction in all losses between now and the end of next September. While that figure is less daunting than accident reduction goals set in the past, it won't be easy to achieve. An active and participatory safety culture, however, will go a long way toward helping you and your Soldiers reach and even surpass all of this year's objectives. Here's how culture can help, broken down by each individual objective.

Objective 1a: Identify your organization's top three accident loss areas and provide tools and programs specifically targeted to mitigate the risks that led to those losses. Every unit has its own distinct safety culture, whether good or bad. As a leader, you should know not only what kind of culture you have, but also what risks your Soldiers face most often. Your leadership style helps set the culture, and a leader who is committed and actively leading risk management will garner more buy-in from his or her Soldiers on the unit's safety programs. Willing participation from all stakeholders is a key ingredient in recognizing your formation's top hazards and targeting them with appropriate and effective tools.

Objective 1b: Engaged leaders are the key to reducing our most prevalent cause of Army mishaps — human error. Incorporate proactive measures in your plans to establish a positive safety climate in your organization. Positive safety cultures are, by their very nature, proactive. Engaged leaders deal with the "ifs" and "thens" before a mishap happens instead of after, actually preventing accidents in the process. They also actively seek buy-in from not only their Soldiers, but leaders at every level across the chain of command. This "peer leadership" ensures there are no weak links in the fabric of the unit's safety culture, where even a seemingly minor disruption could put many Soldiers at risk. Conversely, negative safety cultures are almost always reactive, with leaders taking causal factors at their face value and enforcing safety as an inconvenient, but required, mandate. The check-the-block mindset that dominated safety for many years is representative of this, and we've worked hard as an Army to move away from that model. Stay proactive and you'll stay ahead.

Objective 1c: Specify the metrics you will use to track, analyze and evaluate your progress in reducing accidental loss in your unit. Safety is part art, part science. Establishing a positive and proactive safety culture is most definitely art, but backing up your programs with verifiable data is where science enters the picture. The Army Readiness Assessment Program is a great tool to help you identify which metrics matter most in your formation. Thousands of assessments have verified time and again that units with proactive safety cultures operate in high-risk environments at significantly reduced accidental loss rates than those that simply react to accidents. I encourage leaders to continue leveraging this institutionalized program. The metrics will show where you're reducing injuries and saving lives.

Objective 2: For each of those top three loss areas identified, establish a quantitative goal to achieve a minimum 10 percent loss reduction and develop a unique system for defining goals and success. When approached correctly, this objective should be a culmination of the previous three; each goal is part of the cycle that leads to accident prevention and loss reduction. By quantifying progress (or lack thereof), you can make an informed decision on what is and isn't working for your Soldiers. This analysis should be a continual process throughout the fiscal year, with benchmarks you set for your unit's particular circumstances.

Fiscal 2014's objectives are designed to validate what many units and organizations are already doing exceptionally well. With an aggressive and proactive approach to risk management, leaders can take them from goal to reality. As always, my team and I stand ready to help — let us know how we can make safety pay for you!

Army Safe is Army Strong!

TIMOTHY J. EDENS
Brigadier General, USA
Director of Army Safety

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U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER

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CHANGE OF SEASON

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One of the most beautiful times of the year to ride is during the fall as nature's colors reach their full brilliance. However, despite the season's beauty, fall can be an especially dangerous time for riders. With days getting shorter and temperatures falling, motorcyclists need to adjust their riding techniques accordingly.

See and be seen

As the days shorten, you'll be spending more time riding in the dark. While you'll be able to enjoy some beautiful sunrises and sunsets as you ride to and from work, you'll also have to deal with the sun's glare. That glare, especially when the sun is low on the horizon, can make it hard for drivers to see you or you to see the road. You have probably experienced this many times in a car. Despite leaning your head back, pulling down the sun visor and wearing your sunglasses, you're still partially blinded by the glare.

This problem can be worse for motorcyclists. Even if your helmet has a visor or tinted shield to reduce the glare, you'll still have problems seeing oncoming traffic. If you can't reduce the glare, you'll have to hold your head so you can see the road while trying to keep the sun out of your eyes. This usually means riding with your head in an awkward, tucked position.

To be seen, you need to position yourself in your lane where you'll be as visible as possible to oncoming traffic. This is particularly important when approaching intersections, where the bottom-line rule is to always assume someone will pull out in front of you. You need to prepare yourself for that by adjusting your speed accordingly, being ready to maneuver quickly and always leaving yourself a way out. While these tips apply year round, they're especially important in the fall, when the sun's glare makes it harder for others to see you during sunrise and sunset.

Slip-sliding away

Falling leaves present their own hazards. Wet leaves reduce traction and can make riding to work or taking weekend trips on twisty, two-lane roads more dangerous. Smart riders adjust their speed going into curves and look well ahead to choose the best line to avoid any wet, slick leaves. As temperatures drop, smart riders will be on the lookout for shaded curves, where the lack of sunlight has kept the ice from melting. Whether you ride in the Great Smokies, Cascades, Adirondacks or foothills of the Alps, it's up to you to be aware of the road conditions before you ride. Every morning, I check the weather, dress accordingly and mentally prepare myself before starting my motorcycle.

Speaking of dressing for the ride, there's nothing worse than having cold hands and feet. Not only is being cold uncomfortable, it can impair your ability to control your motorcycle. Whenever my hands begin to feel a slight chill, I start adding layers of clothing. I put my summer gloves away and wear my winter set without the liner. When my hands start feeling cold again, I add the liners and I'm good until the spring. I do the same thing with my jacket and pants. Because my boots provide excellent protection from the elements, I just wear thicker socks in the late fall and early winter.

The cold not only affects your body, it can also affect your ability to make good decisions. A friend with many years of riding experience crashed during an early winter morning when he failed to recognize slippery road conditions ahead of him on an exit ramp. Being cold, he was less alert to dangers and didn't spot the spilled diesel fuel until it was too late to avoid it. Luckily for him, he was wearing the appropriate personal protective gear and only suffered a broken left arm and some ruffled pride. Regardless your level of riding experience, being cold and not having your head in the game can bite you.

Storing your motorcycle

When the riding season ends, you'll definitely want to protect your motorcycle by properly winterizing and storing it. Some of you will put up your bikes in November, so now is the time to start thinking about the proper storage techniques. Your owner's manual, coupled with the T-CLOCS (Tires, Controls, Lights, Oil, Chassis and Stand) inspection checklist, will guide you through the proper steps. For easy reference, here are some tips to help your bike survive its winter hibernation:

- Change the oil.

- Fill the fuel tank and add fuel stabilizer.

- Properly inflate the tires.

- Wash and wax the painted and chromed surfaces.

- Follow the instructions in your owner's manual to disconnect and remove the battery.

- Plug the exhaust and air cleaner openings to keep out any critters.

- Make sure you conspicuously mark any plugs you install so you don't embarrass yourself in the spring with a motorcycle that won't start.

- Use a cover that will breathe, such as light canvas, to protect your motorcycle. A plastic cover can create condensation and cause rust.

- Attach a check sheet to the throttle or make a note in your owner's manual to remind you of what you did when you stored your motorcycle.

Winter — and the snowplow that buried your driveway with two feet of snow to shovel — will soon be gone. By following the steps in your owner's manual, T-CLOCS checklist and the check sheet you made, you'll save money on maintenance costs and get on the road quicker in the spring. Live to ride and ride safe!

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THE ABSENT GROUND GUIDE

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"Holy cow! Did you just see that?" I asked my friend. "That garbage truck almost ran over me!" All the driver could say was, "I'm so sorry. I didn't see you back there."

During the months leading up to this near miss, that driver, Sam, had been operating his dump truck without a ground guide. He'd been doing it for so long that it was habit. According to him, he worked a lot faster doing everything by himself. At the time, his favorite phrase was, "Who needs a ground guide?"

Master Sgt. Samuel Samson served in the military for 32 years as a motor vehicle operations specialist and was a decorated motor pool manager. An expert at everything motorized, he was known as Sacred Sam because he was very passionate about his job. He was always a stickler for the details; everything had to be done by the book. Sam was a model Soldier.

Fast forward a few years later, and Sam had started his own garbage disposal company. With money he had saved, he bought a couple of trucks and hired some employees. As the business prospered, so did his fleet of trucks. In an effort to save money, Sam decided to drive one of his trucks. He was comfortable driving and had never had an accident. Little did he know things were about to change.

Sam's close call with me was terrifying, and I hoped he'd learned his lesson. Sadly, that wasn't the case. Three weeks later, my friends and I were on our way home when we noticed a large crowd and flashing lights at the middle school. We thought something big must have happened because of all the commotion, so we headed over to investigate.

There were children and parents crying everywhere. A bystander told us that a 12-year-old student was struck and killed as he was crossing the parking lot. A dump truck was backing up and ran him over. Sam said he never saw the kid and claimed he came out of nowhere.

Sam's story is tragic and could've been avoided. The Army gives us tools and training that should be adopted as life skills, both on and off duty. They should also be carried with Soldiers even after they leave the military.

Did You Know?
Ground guiding is a task almost every Soldier performs. Ground guides assist equipment operators in identifying potential hazards, obstacles and personnel that they may not otherwise see. However, when it's not executed safely, lives are in jeopardy. Each year, Soldiers and civilians are seriously injured and killed in ground-guiding accident. Safety officials agree that most of these types of accidents are preventable. To learn more, visit our Know the Signs campaign page at https://safety.army.mil/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=jllkd_ukB6E%3d&tabid=2409 and https://safety.army.mil/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=wvSuxilYxRY%3d&tabid=2409. For standardized visual signals, check out Field Manual 21-60 (Visual Signals) at http://armypubs.army.mil/doctrine/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/fm21_60.pdf. Also check out our Driver's Training Toolbox for more resources at https://safety.army.mil/drivertrainingtoolbox/ (AKO log in required).

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POOLING YOUR RESOURCES

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An Army aviation maintenance complex shares many of the attributes of a crime scene. When something goes wrong, or a crime is committed, there are many pieces to the puzzle. If left to their own, each one has varying degrees of value. But pieced together, they form a picture that can be of great value, impact efficiency dramatically and, ultimately, affect the safe operation of our aircraft.

In the aviation world, when a failure occurs on a helicopter, you have a number of variables and players. First, you have the pilot, pilot in command and crew chiefs who experienced the failure. Next, you have the maintenance personnel, along with their troubleshooting trees and test equipment. Along with that you have the data captured in flight instruments and recorders. And don't forget U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Command, U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command and the host of other manufacturers' technical representatives. Take all of this and throw in a group of maintenance test pilots and you have an idea of the need to pool your resources.

This all came to light recently, when one of our UH-60s had to perform an emergency landing into a corn field about five miles from our facility. The crew started experiencing a degree of high-siding and a slew of flight instrument indication anomalies. As they monitored the situation, they noticed some unusual noises coming from the No. 1 engine and a drop in rotor revolutions per minute. The situation seemed sketchy at best, and it was decided to go into lockout and put her down.

A maintenance team was dispatched and attempted some rapid troubleshooting in hopes of a quick fix. After no luck and the weather turning, it was decided to get the aircraft out of the farmer's field and back home for some tender loving care. So, a tow team was assembled and off it went.

This is where I enter the picture. I'm an avionics shop supervisor, and a couple of my guys were on the team dispatched to the scene. The problem was quite complex, in that it involved most of the components mentioned in the previous paragraph (crew, maintenance, recorder data, technical reps, etc.). But what intrigued me was orchestrating a coordinated effort to pull all of the information and assets together at our disposal. Off I went, emailing, interviewing, phoning and analyzing. Along the way, I gathered information, passed information on, formulated reports and did whatever I could to expedite and elevate the findings and indications.

While interacting with all of the players, we were able to put together a clear picture of what happened that was agreeable to all. In doing so, it gave us in maintenance a path that allowed us to zero in on a specific area of the aircraft and eventually down to the problem. It also gave us the assurance that we had covered all of the bases to safely release the aircraft to the maintenance test pilots. The aircraft is now back up and flying missions again.

We in the Army aviation community have an enormous network with a wealth of knowledge and expertise that we can pool together at a moment's notice. This example is just one of many that probably occur across not just in aviation, but any number of endeavors within the Army as a whole. Just as with a crime scene, we want to move safely, accurately and thoroughly pull together all of those resources to maximize our efforts and achieve mission success.

SAVE A LIFE (OR TWO)

WARRANT OFFICER 1 JUSTIN JESUS
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My dad always took the time to ensure his children were safe. As soon as he noticed one of us doing something wrong or unsafe, he let us know immediately so it didn't become a bad habit. I remember one day when I unbuckled my seat belt just before we'd reached our house. My father heard the "click" from the back seat of our Nissan Sentra and asked what it was. From the tone of his voice, I knew I was in serious trouble.

He said, "Boy, you need to put that seat belt back on." I argued that we were so close to home that I could actually see our house, but he didn't bend. He told me it didn't matter if we were 100 yards or 100 miles from our destination; seat belts stay on until we park. You'd think that would be a lesson I'd never forget. Unfortunately, I did.

Several years later, I was about eight months into my first deployment to Iraq, driving a pickup truck to drop off some tools. I was only driving about 100 feet on an improved road with a speed limit of 10 kilometers. Surely I didn't need to put on my seat belt for such a short trip, right? Wrong!

As I slowed the pickup to cross over a speed bump, something told me to look at my rearview mirror. I was shocked to see another noncombat vehicle approaching with no signs of stopping. I grabbed hold of the steering wheel, braced for impact and then BAM! I was rear ended. My first thought was back to that day when my father scolded me for taking off my seat belt. I had just proven his point.

Once I realized I was OK, I got out of the pickup to check on the people in the other vehicle. They were also all right, but the front end of their vehicle was smashed. We were all lucky, and this accident reiterated my father's seat belt lesson from years earlier. I was determined to never put myself in that situation again.

Fast forward 11 months, and I'm back in the States, partying at a house with a couple of friends. It was just after midnight when we climbed into our designated driver's 2006 Mustang GT convertible to head home. Without even thinking about it, I immediately buckled up and settled in for the ride. A few miles down the road, I noticed the driver and front-seat passenger weren't wearing their seat belts. I told them they both needed to buckle up. Of course they gave me a hard time, but eventually they took my advice because they knew it was right thing to do.

No more than five minutes later, as we neared an intersection traveling about 40 mph, we saw a car approaching in the oncoming lane. Just as we entered the intersection, the driver of the other vehicle turned left in front of us without yielding. We collided nearly head on.

The Mustang was totaled, but we were all alive. I only had minor bruises on my neck from the seat belt. The front passenger and driver suffered some injuries on their legs and heads. Had this accident happened just a few minutes earlier, they likely would have died. Later, they both thanked me for insisting they buckle up.

Whether you're driving a combat vehicle or your privately owned ride, seat belts are a must. Make sure everyone else in the vehicle is buckled up too. After two close calls, I'm not afraid to tell someone that the vehicle doesn't move until everyone puts on their seat belts. You should do the same. You might just save a life or two.

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FATIGUE MANAGEMENT

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It was day seven at the Joint Readiness Training Center and it showed on the faces of the young infantrymen. They were exposed to typical central Louisiana weather in November; the nights were cooler and often marked by heavy rains. The platoon sergeant worked hard to keep the troops motivated and moving under their combat loads. No one wanted to be cold or wet, so the rucks were especially heavy.

With ammo, rations and water, each Soldier carried more than 100 pounds of gear. After seven days of constant operations, the effects of that weight were evident. Even the fittest of the platoon were hollow-eyed with fatigue. Their reactions were slow and their minds fuzzy. They rucked up and moved on toward their next mission, an attack on a suspected strong point five clicks away. Less than 500 meters into the movement, the tired point man missed seeing movement ahead as he cleared the edge of a small grove. The opposing force ambushed the platoon. No one survived the notional mission.

The above story is a classic fatigue mishap. Fatigue is part of an infantryman's life in the field. Without rest or support, fatigue can reduce an effective unit to a leaderless gaggle even in the most benevolent terrain. With rough terrain and bad weather, the effects of fatigue multiply exponentially. The more hills you have to climb and the worse the weather, the faster you are going to tire. Physical training reduces that rate, but it does not eliminate it. On the other hand, carrying too much weight accelerates exhaustion. This is common sense, right? Maybe so, but common sense does not always prevail.

Consider the risk-versus-gain aspects of combat loading your Soldiers. What are you risking when you configure your Soldiers for combat? The answer — your mission and Soldiers. If Soldiers have their mission-essential equipment, they may be uncomfortable at times, but they will be able to sustain their combat effectiveness. If Soldiers are being overloaded and collapse from the weight of comfort items, they may not even reach the objective. By overloading Soldiers with comfort-related items, leaders are in effect expending them before they have the opportunity to achieve the mission.

Crew rest plans are a vital combat multiplier for military operations. If the Soldiers in your command are constantly fatigued and don't have time to re-energize, you run the risk of mission failure and casualties. In today's battlefield, the number of possible hazards is immense. It takes mental sharpness to detect all the hazards that the enemy has to throw at you and your Soldiers. A Soldier's state of mind is absolutely a big factor in successful missions and bringing everyone home safely. Decreased mental capacity due to fatigue causes stress and leads to distracted Soldiers.

It's important to recognize the potential for stress and fatigue in any event or situation:

- Physical stressors include external environmental conditions such as heat and noise, equipment weight and the terrain underfoot.

- Mental stressors involve information that places demands on either your thoughts or feelings.

- Combat stressors can be physical or mental and occur during the course of combat-related duties. These stressors can result from enemy action, your unit or your home life.

- Stress is the way your body and mind counteract stressors:

- Positive stress helps you respond appropriately to normal stressors; some amount of stress is necessary to prompt effective responses.

- Too little stress may make you distracted, forgetful or cause you to fall asleep.

- Too much stress may make you focus on only one aspect of a task, neglecting the larger picture.

- Extreme stress may cause you to "freeze up" or become agitated and flee.

- Prolonged extreme stress can cause physical and mental disablement.

Physical fatigue results from:
- Hard or prolonged work

- Muscle tiredness

- Aerobic fatigue

- Sleep deprivation

- Physical illness

- Intense emotions, such as anxiety and fear

Mental fatigue results from:
- Prolonged mental effort on a specific task

- Emotions such as boredom or uncertainty

Battle fatigue/combat stress reaction is usually present at some level in all unit personnel in a theater of combat operations. Soldiers and leaders are responsible for identifying personnel who require treatment for battle fatigue or combat stress reaction. Watch for stress indicators in your peers and encourage other Soldiers to self-report. The key element of complacency is your attitude.

Leaders and mission planners need to be completely in tune with the unit and Soldiers' operational tempo and make sure that the amount of fatigue and stress that the Soldiers are experiencing is taken into consideration for mission success. Remember, a fatigued Soldier is at increased risk of injury or death.

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DECONFLICT UAS AND MANNED AIRCRAFT

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As an aviation safety officer at Kandahar Air Base in 2010-2011 assigned to Task Force Out Front, I was a pilot in command and air mission commander and flew more than 150 combat missions responding to numerous troops-in-contact calls in Kandahar province. During my deployment, we had a mid-air collision with an unmanned aircraft system because communication and tracking of UASs between ground units within the same brigade was ineffective. Here's what happened.

A scout weapons team responded to a troops-in-contact call from Iron 6, which reported indirect and direct fire on "Fort Iron." After arriving on station, the ground unit in contact informed the SWT that an RQ-11 Raven was operating over the target area at 3,580 feet mean sea level altitude. This information had not been previously reported to the SWT during the check-in procedures with the battle space owners. The lead aircraft was below the reported altitude of the RQ-11 and informed the ground unit that the SWT would remain below that altitude so friendly and enemy positions could be quickly identified by the SWT, and the Raven should be moved to a higher altitude away from the target area.

The ground unit acknowledged this course of action, and the SWT proceeded to identify friendly and enemy positions. Suddenly, the trail aircraft collided with the Raven at about 3,250 feet MSL, shattering the left side windscreen and damaging the left side of the glare shield, a digital camera and an M4 carbine. The SWT aircraft recovered to Forward Operating Base Ramrod without further incident and no injuries to either crewmember. In order to prevent such accidents, I think special emphasis should be made for all battle space owners to retain timely and accurate information of all assets, including UASs, controlled detonations, other aircraft and indirect fires, at all times so this information can be communicated to all aircraft operating within their area.

So why did this accident happen? First, the AMC chose to remain in an active UAS restricted operations zone after realizing the UAS was still in it, resulting in a collision. This could be prevented if aviators who find they are inadvertently in any type of ROZ take immediate action to exit it, regardless the tactical situation. As aviators, it is easy to get caught up in the moment.

The ground unit was also at fault. The radio operator agreed to coordinate the airspace by altitude separation. The information was not received by the UAS operator in a timely manner. This airspace deconfliction measure proved ineffective. Without positive two-way communication between an aircrew and a UAS operator, airspace deconfliction cannot be made in a timely manner for an aircraft to enter a ROZ.

The collision occurred as a result of insufficient airspace deconfliction, poor communication between the RQ-11 operator and the OH-58D aircrews, and the haste of all parties involved inherent with combat action. Because of the lack of situational awareness of the airspace, a RQ-11 should always be provided horizontal separation rather than vertical separation. Even though clearance had been afforded to the SWT from brigade and squadron battle space owners, and the ground unit had, apparently, agreed to vertical separation between the SWT and the UAS, the SWT was not necessarily communicating directly with the UAS operator. Steps taken to deconflict aircraft were not communicated to that operator quickly enough to take effect. The collision occurred as a direct result of the ground unit's lack of battle tracking of their UAS, insufficient airspace deconfliction, lack of communication between the RQ-11 operator and the OH-58D aircrews, and the haste of all parties involved inherent with combat action.

This accident could have been avoided with better communication between the aircrews and the battle space owners. Combat action can afford a short tactical pause to ensure friendly elements do not interfere with each other when locating and engaging enemy forces. A coordinated effort must be in place to integrate ground and air forces before actions are taken. It is incumbent upon all PCs and AMCs to reduce the number of hazards to a reasonable level when conducting combat operations, even with little or no notice of the operation.

AN UPHILL BATTLE

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It was a typical day in Tennessee — nice weather, beautiful scenery and plenty of fun things to do. I was in high school and, like many people throughout the country, raced all-terrain vehicles during my free time. I'd never taken an official safety course, but my dad had done a good job in giving me instruction on proper riding techniques.

On this particular day, I had grown tired of riding the same old trails that surrounded our property, so I cleared a new one to practice for an upcoming race. After a few passes, though, I didn't think it was much of a test either, so headed out in search of more challenging terrain. I soon found what I was looking for in a dried-out creek bed.

I decided to incorporate this newly found territory into my practice race loop. I made my way down a hill into the creek bed, rode a short distance and then searched for an area to climb back out. The sides were quite steep, but I soon found a spot that looked climbable. There was not much room to gain speed, so I put my ATV in first gear and just went for it. About three-quarters of the way to the top, I lost all forward momentum and the ATV slid back down the hill. I decided to try it again.

On the second attempt, the same result occurred. This time, however, as I slid back down the hill, my right-rear tire bumped a tree. This caused the ATV to spin sideways and roll over to the left. I was not overly concerned, though, because I had flipped an ATV in the past.

Instinctively, I jumped off and tried to get out of the way. Failing to consider the lack of traction, I slipped and fell. The ATV continued to roll and the handlebar landed on my hand. Once the ATV came to a stop, I got up and rolled it back onto four wheels. I then sat there and thought about a better way to get out. I eventually found an exit that was not as difficult and finally made it out of the creek.

By now, it was late afternoon and my hand was really starting to bother me, so I headed home. Along the way, my hand throbbed as I traversed the bumpy terrain. My dad was standing in the garage when I got home and asked if I was all right. He could tell I had wrecked because I was covered in dirt. I told him about my hand and he decided we better have a doctor take a look at it.

X-rays later revealed that I had broken a bone in my right hand. I was crushed because I knew this would affect my riding time. In fact, it caused me to miss the next six weeks of the race season. Fortunately, after six weeks in a cast, I was back to normal.

I learned a few lessons that day, including:

- Never ride alone. If something were to happen, as it did to me, a riding buddy will be there to assist or go for help.
- Don't ride terrain that exceeds your skill level. I was an experienced rider and thought I could handle any challenge. I was wrong.
- Always let someone know where you're going and when you plan to return. When you don't show up, they'll know where to start looking for you.
- Take the appropriate safety courses.
- Ensure that you and anyone else you ride with wears appropriate personal protective equipment. Accidents can happen in a flash. PPE can save your life.

FYI

The following tips from the ATV Safety Institute can help you avoid having an accident like the one described in this story:

- Some hills are too steep for your abilities. Use common sense. If the hill you're approaching looks too steep, it probably is. Also, some hills are just too steep for your ATV, regardless of your abilities.

- Never ride past the limit of your visibility. If you cannot see what is on or over the crest of a hill, slow down until you have a clear view.

- The key to being a good hill rider is to keep your weight uphill at all times.

When approaching an uphill climb, you should:

- Keep your feet firmly on the footrests.

- Shift the ATV into a lower gear and speed up BEFORE climbing the hill so you can maintain momentum.

- When approaching an uphill climb, either move up on the seat and lean forward, or stand and position your torso over the front wheels.

As you're climbing, you may need to shift to a lower gear to prevent lugging the engine or stalling. To shift into a lower gear on a hill, remember:

- Keep your bodyweight forward as you prepare to shift gears. For steeper hills, lean forward as much as possible.

- Shift quickly while momentarily releasing the throttle; this will help keep the front wheels from lifting.

If you don't have enough power to reach the top of the hill but still have forward momentum and enough room to turn around safely:

- Keep your weight uphill.

- Make a U-turn before you lose speed.

- Proceed downhill in a lower gear, keeping your weight to the uphill side.

If you're riding uphill and lose all momentum:

- Keep your weight uphill and apply the brakes to come to a stop.

- Never allow the ATV to roll backward.

- Apply the parking brake while keeping your weight uphill.

- Dismount on the uphill side or to a side if pointed straight uphill, and follow the procedures described in your owner's manual.

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SHOCKING SAFETY TIPS

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Georgia National Guard
Winder, Ga.

Electrical safety can mean many different things. It can include protection of outlets in your home to knowing that you can't submerge certain electrically charged items in water. No matter the task, taking appropriate safety measures is important.

In Jasper, Ga., my hometown, a house burned to the ground because of the lack of proper outlet usage. Too many items were plugged in to a faulty outlet. This resulted in a house fire that destroyed all of the contents of the home. Luckily, no one was injured, but two pets died.

Back in 2009, I was in charge of the police academy in Ghazni, Afghanistan. Part of my duties included maintaining a safe environment. Unfortunately, my area was laden with faulty wiring, as my predecessor didn't do a good job. As a result, a staff sergeant was shocked not once, but twice. The second shock resulted in a fall. Fortunately, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. As a result, contractors repaired the substandard wiring system.

Because faulty wiring and improper use of outlets can have devastating effects, it is important to follow proper safety steps. Never use electrical equipment near water. This is especially important in the hot summer months when we are more apt to be around pools and other outdoor water areas.

Treat all electrical lines with caution. Even low voltage electrical cords can cause damage if improperly handled. When installing new features such as light switches or ceiling fans, make sure you turn off the breaker. If this isn't done, sparks could ignite a fire and anyone in contact with energized equipment could receive an electrical shock.

Don't overload an outlet. Doing so could lead to a fire by overstressing the electrical current.

Unplug all appliances when a storm is present. This prevents electrical surges from traveling through the outlets and ultimately protects not only the appliance, but also the house from possible damage and fire.

Use the correct wattage on light bulbs. This may sound frivolous, but it's an important tip. Using a higher-wattage bulb than what is stated on the fixture may result in overheating and fire.

Electrical safety may seem like common sense. However, you can read the newspaper or watch the local news and see how failing to follow electrical safety rules can lead to fire. If electrical safety is not adhered to, it not only can damage structures, but also injure people by causing shock, burns or electrocution.

If you have children, make sure to stress the importance of not placing electrical items near water, never overloading electrical outlets and adhering to the rules about not touching outside wires. Make sure the Soldiers and civilians in your workplace are also aware of these issues. Don't wait until it is too late to address the importance of electrical safety. Prevent the accident before it even has a chance to happen.

Did You Know

The newly released Department of Army Pamphlet 385-26, The Army Electrical Safety Program, dated Feb. 1, 2013, provides electrical safety guidance to protect Army personnel, facilities and equipment against electrical hazards. The publication covers a myriad of topics, including electrical safety requirements, tactical electrical safety and electrical safety for all Army activities.

Safety awareness and education are key in preventing electrical fires, injuries and fatalities. Get the facts and don't get zapped! Check out the Army's Electrical Safety Program publication today by visiting https://safety.army.mil/groundsafety/PUBLICATIONS/tabid/352/Default.aspx.

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FLIGHT INSTRUMENTS HELP ... WHEN THEY WORK

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 JASON SHARP

It was a beautiful and sunny late October morning in Kandahar, Afghanistan, during my deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. We were a scout weapons team conducting routine reconnaissance in the Arghandab River Valley. This was the last flight before going home on mid-tour leave and everything was going well.

Things had finally settled down after a long, drawn out fighting season. The "Green Zone," where most of the action took place throughout the summer, was quieter, which made it easier for us to find some of the unused weapon caches left behind by Taliban fighters. As we conducted our checks with the owning ground units, they passed information on several grids they wanted us to investigate. After we loaded the data into our system, we would systematically check the areas and report back to the ground unit if we saw anything out of the norm. This is where I should have realized something was up.

Normally, the lead aircraft conducts the reconnaissance, while the trail aircraft sets up in a position to cover lead in case they take fire. While checking out these grids, I noticed my trail aircraft was farther away than normal and not in the greatest position to cover me. Since the action had died down in the area of operations, I wasn't too worried about it. As we continued checking our last named area of interest, we informed trail that we didn't see anything. He called back and said he had something at our last NAI and wanted me to come back around to cover him. So, as we came back around, I noticed he was several kilometers away again. This should have been the second hint that something was up.

We had been flying this area of operations for the last seven months and were very familiar with it. We didn't need our moving maps to navigate through it and only really used them to enter grids to get to an exact point. As trail finished his reconnaissance, I assumed lead again.

About this time, we received a blue force tracker message from the tactical operations center ordering us to return to Kandahar Air Field immediately due to bad weather. We thought it was funny because it was beautiful in the Arghandab River Valley, but we weren't going to argue against a shortened mission.

As we made our way back through Wild Turkey Pass into Kandahar City, we could see a huge dust cloud developing in the Red Desert and increased speed to get back into KAF. As we crossed the saddle at No Drugs Pass, approximately three miles from Mustang Ramp, KAF disappeared. Within seconds, visibility was close to zero, and KAF announced the field was under instrument flight rules.

I called trail and said I was slowing and maintaining a heading toward Mustang Ramp. I had my pilot put us up direct to Mustang Ramp to ensure I was still traveling straight at it. My PI told me to come left and Mustang Ramp was three and a half kilometers to our nine o'clock position. At that moment, I realized my global positioning system/inertial navigation system was degraded and had been all day, which meant trail had been looking at the correct NAIs while we were nowhere near them.

Thankfully, we were only a short distant from the airfield and knew there were no hazards to avoid between us and the ramp. We made it in safely, but not without a major butt pucker factor for the last minute or two.

This incident could have turned out badly had we been farther from KAF. Finding out your GPS/INS system is not working properly at the moment you might have to declare IIMC is not the way you want to begin an emergency procedure.

There were several hints throughout the flight that something was up. We were consistently confirming between cockpits that we didn't see anything at each NAI. The problem was caused by the fact we weren't looking at the same ones. I just didn't put two and two together. I had become so familiar with the AO over the first seven months that I didn't rely on the navigation system, at least not until I couldn't see anymore and really needed it.

Anyone who has flown in Regional Command South knows the weather can change very rapidly and you need to be prepared to execute procedures for IIMC. Luckily, my complacency didn't injure my co-pilot, team or myself.

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THE NATURE OF THE BEAST

AIRMAN 1ST CLASS JAMES KIRSHNER
377th Security Forces Squadron
Kirtland Air Force Base, N.M.

How fun is it to be in your bed, injured, on your 21st birthday? Well, that's what happened to me when I had a dirt bike accident on June 22, 2010. My injuries consisted of a concussion, shattered collarbone, road rash and leg laceration. I was wearing all my required gear but could've done more to prevent what happened to me.

I was riding my Yamaha YZ125 dirt bike I had just gotten that day along with my new helmet. I had been riding bikes for about seven years in Texas, but the conditions in New Mexico were very different. It was a freak accident, and I sure didn't see it coming!

I was riding with a few friends on the hard-packed side of an off-road course. I was going about 25-35 mph when I hit a deep rut in the dirt/sand. When I hit the rut, it jerked the handlebars to the right and shot me over the bike. The bike followed me. When I hit the ground, I'm sure I hit head and shoulders first, which gave me a concussion and shattered collarbone. Then the bike peg got a hold of my calf and ripped a hole in my leg into the muscle.

I don't remember the accident; my friends had to tell me. I don't remember my friends putting me in my truck, driving me to the hospital or putting me in a wheelchair. When I woke up, I was sitting in a wheelchair, and I started to fill out my paperwork. I called my supervisor, told him what had happened and then passed out again. Soon after, I woke up in a hospital bed and called my supervisor again, telling him the same story. His response was, "You might want to get your head checked out." After getting all cleaned up and having X-rays of my broken collarbone, I was released for my seven-month road to recovery.

My advice to other riders: Even if you've been riding for a while, ride to your limit and never let someone try to push you to where you might get hurt. Pay attention to your surroundings. You might feel comfortable, but you never know what's around a turn or hill. Riding with friends is a good idea because if you do get hurt, you won't be alone and stranded.

I learned that no matter how long you've been riding, bad stuff can happen; it's the nature of the beast. Don't rush into things. Build your skills gradually, especially with a new bike or if you haven't ridden for a while. Make sure you have everything you need to ride, including a helmet, gloves, long pants, long shirts, goggles and above-the-ankle boots. You might even want to invest in a chest protector to protect you from flying debris. A neck brace is also a good investment. It'll stop your head from going too far to the front, back or side when you ride. Riding pants are good for breathability and will protect you from rocks and the heat of the engine. I bought all the gear because realized I'm worth it.

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WHAT'S MODERATION?

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I love to hang out and have a few drinks with my friends. The camaraderie and bonding that takes place during those fun times is priceless. Sometimes, though, the fun can go a little too far. When it does, not only can it ruin your night (and next day, for sure), it could cost you your life.

I didn't really drink or party in high school. I'm from a small town in Oklahoma where everyone knew each other, so it wasn't like I had to do anything special to fit in. I joined the Army Reserve while I was still in high school. During basic training, we all walked the straight and narrow because it was the right thing to do, plus we had no leave or passes anyway.

My freshmen year of college, however, was very different. My friends lived in the dormitories and I was always there. After all, that's where all the women were. After a decent fall semester, I decided to join a fraternity.

That spring semester was interesting — to say the least — because I was a pledge! The parties, the hazing, the humiliating activities and the alcohol brought us all together. Moderation was the last thing we thought about. I would soon learn its importance, though.

My lesson on moderation came one night during a "sneak," which is when one or two pledges are kidnapped and taken to a secret location. The other pledges are given clues to help find the kidnapped pledges, who have to drink a beer or shot every two minutes until they are found. On this particular night, I happened to be a kidnappee. About 45 minutes passed before I was found, and during that time, there was lots of forced drinking (to fit in), puking and more drinking.

Needless to say, I don't remember the majority of that night. Apparently, after my fellow pledges "rescued" me, I was dropped off at the dorms, where my friends took care of me. They told me I was as white as a sheet and my lips were blue. I was non-responsive, and they were too scared to take me to hospital, so they forced water into my mouth, put me in a cold shower and did their best to keep me conscious all night. They saved my life because I'm certain I had alcohol poisoning.

That experience taught me the importance of moderation. Now I take preventive measures to make sure I'm never in that situation again. If I ever feel like I might be drinking too much at a party, I just sneak away (with the assistance of a designated driver). It's smart to remove yourself from a situation before you lose control. Knowing when to say when might save your life.

FYI

MODERATION IS KEY

MAYO CLINIC STAFF
www.mayoclinic.com

Alcohol use is a slippery slope. Moderate drinking can offer some health benefits. But it's easy to drink too heavily, leading to serious health consequences.

It sounds like a mixed message: Drinking alcohol may offer some health benefits, especially for your heart. On the other hand, alcohol may increase your risk of health problems and damage your heart. So which is it? When it comes to drinking alcohol, the key is doing so only in moderation. Certainly, you don't have to drink any alcohol. And if you currently don't drink, don't start drinking for the possible health benefits. In some cases, it's safest to avoid alcohol entirely — the possible benefits don't outweigh the risks. Here's a closer look at the connection between alcohol and your health.

Health benefits of moderate alcohol use

Moderate alcohol consumption may provide some health benefits. It may:

- Reduce your risk of developing heart disease

- Reduce your risk of dying of a heart attack

- Possibly reduce your risk of strokes, particularly ischemic strokes

- Lower your risk of gallstones

- Possibly reduce your risk of diabetes

- Even so, the evidence about the possible health benefits of alcohol isn't certain, and alcohol may not benefit everyone who drinks.

Moderate alcohol use may be of most benefit only if you're an older adult or if you have existing risk factors for heart disease, such as high cholesterol. If you're a middle-aged or younger adult, some evidence shows that even moderate alcohol use may cause more harm than good. In fact, if you're a woman and drink alcohol, talk to your doctor about taking supplemental folate to help reduce the risk of breast cancer associated with alcohol use. You can take other steps to benefit your cardiovascular health besides drinking, such as eating a healthy diet and exercising.

Guidelines for moderate alcohol use

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that if you choose to drink alcohol, you do so only in moderation — up to one drink a day for women or two drinks a day for men. Examples of one drink include:

- Beer: 12 fluid ounces (355 milliliters)

- Wine: 5 fluid ounces (148 milliliters)

- Distilled spirits (80 proof): 1.5 fluid ounces (44 milliliters)

When to avoid alcohol use

Keep in mind that moderate use of alcohol doesn't mean that using alcohol is risk-free. For example, if you binge drink — such as having four or five drinks in the space of a few hours — you face serious health problems. Likewise if you drink and drive. Here are other situations in which the risks of alcohol use may outweigh possible health benefits:

- You're pregnant or trying to become pregnant

- You take medications that can interact with alcohol

- You've had a previous hemorrhagic stroke

- You've been diagnosed with alcoholism or alcohol abuse

- You have liver or pancreatic disease

- You have heart failure or you've been told you have a weak heart or dilated cardiomyopathy

- You're planning to drive a vehicle or operate machinery

Some situations are less clear-cut. Use alcohol only with great care and after consulting your doctor if:

- You have a family history of alcoholism

- You take prescription medications for a health problem

- You use over-the-counter pain relievers or fever reducers

- You have a family history of breast cancer
- You have precancerous changes in your esophagus, larynx, pharynx or mouth

Consequences of heavy alcohol use
Although moderate alcohol use may offer some health benefits, heavy drinking — including binge drinking — has no health benefits. Excessive drinking can cause potentially serious health problems, including:

- Certain cancers, including breast cancer and cancers of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, esophagus and liver
- Pancreatitis
- Sudden death if you already have cardiovascular disease
- Heart muscle damage (alcoholic cardiomyopathy) leading to heart failure
- Stroke
- High blood pressure
- Cirrhosis of the liver
- Suicide
- Accidental serious injury or death
- Fetal alcohol syndrome and other health problems in an unborn child

Drink alcohol only in moderation — or not at all
The latest dietary guidelines make it clear that no one should begin drinking or drink more frequently on the basis of potential health benefits. So don't feel pressured to drink alcohol. But if you do drink alcohol and you're healthy, there's probably no need to stop as long as you drink responsibly and in moderation.

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NEVER IGNORE THE CHECKLISTS

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 JOSHUA MCCOY

A slow week in the medevac world can turn crazy in a heartbeat. I know because it happened to my crew. There I was, a new pilot in command flying with a senior pilot in command who was also the company's aviation safety officer. We were in Afghanistan flying med-chase out of a remote outpost. As a company, we rotated crews once a week, so we would spend one week out there about every eight weeks.

As a crew, we decided that if we received an urgent medevac call, I, as the pilot in command, would run to the tactical operations center and the other pilot and crew chiefs would run to the Black Hawk and prepare for departure. At the TOC, the PC would get all the information needed to complete the mission such as grid, radio frequencies, number of patients and mission approval. The PI would get the aircraft up to engine start, to include APU started, avionics on and loaded. They'd have everything on the aircraft ready; the only thing left was for the PC to buckle in and start the engines.

This particular week had been relatively slow. We had only a couple of urgent calls and routine transfers, and all were during the day. We were satisfied with the low flight time, which meant that no Soldiers were being injured or killed. On the forth night of our week-long stay, the call came.

It was 3 a.m. and we were all in deep slumber. Over the handheld radios came the call, "Medevac, medevac, medevac," which meant we had 20 minutes to get up, prepare and take off. I jumped up, threw on my flight suit, put on my boots and I was off on a 200-meter sprint to the TOC at 7,500 foot elevation that was not enjoyable. At the TOC, the medevac aircraft PC and I received mission details and launch approval. As I arrived at my aircraft, I noticed the APU on, the pilot in the left seat and crew chiefs preparing for engine start. All was good. I put on my aviation life support equipment, climbed into the front seat and buckled my seat belt.

As I looked over at the other pilot, I noticed he was holding the controls, staring forward, completely zoned out. I asked if we were ready for engine start and his reply was, "Yep." I looked down and noticed none of the avionics were turned on; not a big deal, just an extra step. So I said, "OK, I will turn on the radios and load the GPS, you start the engines." I got the radios on and the GPS point loaded for the mission and he got the engines started with no issues. I asked if we were ready for departure and his reply was, "Yep."

As I was doing the before takeoff check, I notice the engine power controls were both at idle as opposed to fly, which is where they needed to be. I looked at him, and he was still just holding the controls staring forward and zoned out. I said, "I guess I will put these (engine power control levels) to fly." He looked up and said, "Oh, oh, oh, I was just trying to test you." Typical SP response when they make a mistake.

We flew the mission without any further issues, and, wouldn't you know it, he flew the entire time. The lesson I took away from that medevac call was to never get too comfortable with anyone you are flying with, even seasoned pilots. Also, always use your checklist. Taking that extra 10 seconds to double-check with the checklist saved us from a potential accident.

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OVER MY HEAD

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 MARK A. BEAM
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Jackson, Miss.

I've had many different jobs in my lifetime, but one seems to be ingrained a little deeper in my mind than the others. Maybe it's because it was almost my last.

When I was younger, I had the opportunity to obtain a Class A commercial driver's license. I had no real need for it, but I took the test anyway, passed and put my new license in my wallet for potential future use. About 10 years later, I found myself unemployed and in need of a job. At that time, I had a wife and two children who were depending on me as the family's breadwinner.

As I pondered my next career move, I noticed the classified ads in the local paper were flooded with job opportunities for qualified commercial drivers. I recognized the name of one of the companies that was hiring because I'd met the owner at a social function. I figured applying for the position was worth a shot.

I don't know if it was my charming personality or the fact that the trucking company was really short of drivers, but I was hired that day and told to report at 7:30 the next morning for a road test. I passed the test and was handed the keys to a new 2002 American Class Peterbilt truck with an 18-speed transmission. It was hooked to a 53-foot box trailer. My first trip would be to carry a load from Jackson, Miss., to a warehouse in Newark, N.J.

At first, I was excited as I climbed into the beautiful white rig with red leather interior, double-bunk sleeper, refrigerator and all the latest bells and whistles. I was confident in my ability to command this beast of a truck to the East Coast and back without issue. After all, I had a CDL and passed my 10-minute road test the day before. It wasn't until I pulled out of the parking lot and onto highway that I realized that maybe I was a little too confident in my abilities.

The constant grinding of gears as I merged onto the interstate was evidence of my lack of experience and the potential dangers that lay ahead. With each additional mile, my confidence level decreased and, before long, I realized I'd gotten in way over my head. In retrospect, I should have turned around and been honest about my lack of ability and experience. The owner probably would have allowed me to spend some time riding with one of the company's more experienced drivers to improve my level of competence before sending me out on my own. However, being the type A American male that I am, quitting was not an option.

Needless to say, I had many close calls along the way, all stemming from my lack of experience. I took wrong turns, continued to grind gears and even caused a long traffic jam when I got the rig hung under a low overpass. Fortunately, only the exhaust pipe had minor damage. It wasn't until I passed the "Welcome to Tuscaloosa, Alabama" sign on the final leg of my trip that I began to relax. I knew then that I only had a few more hours to go.

By then I'd been driving for about 18 hours without sleep. To make matters worse, it was 3 a.m., it had been raining consistently for four days and I was traveling in a construction zone with limited visibility due to a downpour. Crews had been laying asphalt in the area, and there was a four-inch drop-off where they'd stopped working. I was startled when the front tires hit the drop-off and may have inadvertently turned the wheel slightly. Just after the rear trailer tires dropped off, the rig's handling started to feel weird. When I looked into my left mirror, I saw my trailer sliding to the left side of the road. I thought, "It's over for me."

Anything that happened from that moment until I was standing in front of the truck in the middle of the pouring rain with my knees shaking is a blur. I do remember clutching the steering wheel with all my strength and taking my foot off of the accelerator. Somehow, the truck had stopped sliding and corrected itself, and I was able to pull over and stop on the shoulder. After collecting myself for a few minutes, I finished my drive back to Jackson.

I learned a valuable lesson that day. Confidence in your abilities is a good trait to have. Overconfidence, however, can take you to places you don't want to go.

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SAFETY MILESTONES

RICHARD ARNDT
U.S. Army Chemical Materials Activity
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Two Army organizations responsible for the safe storage and handling of stockpiled chemical weapons achieved one-year recordable injury rates of zero in June of this year. Deseret Chemical Depot, located in Utah, and Blue Grass Chemical Activity, located at Blue Grass Army Depot in Kentucky, are both subordinate units of the U.S. Army Chemical Materials Activity, headquartered at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration defines a recordable injury as any work-related injury that requires treatment above first aid; is diagnosed as significant by a licensed healthcare professional; or that results in loss of consciousness, death, days away from work, restricted work or transfer to another job. The recordable injury rate is a 12-month rolling average among all the organization's employees. For military organizations, the rate is based on injuries to Department of Defense civilians.

The safety record achieved by DCD and BGCA more closely resembles the risks associated with working in the white-collar financial sector than the hazardous waste disposal industry, which has an industry-wide RIR of 3.6.

DCD is a former CMA installation that once stored the nation's largest and most diverse chemical weapons stockpile. That stockpile was safely eliminated in February 2012 at the Tooele Chemical Agent Disposal Facility, a chemical agent incineration facility located on the installation. After the safe elimination of the chemical weapons stockpile, the depot focused on the handling and monitoring of hazardous and agent-contaminated waste in preparation for the turnover of the installation to the nearby Tooele Army Depot in July 2013.

The depot workforce steadily decreased in size, from about 400 employees prior to stockpile elimination; then dropping to 250 in June 2012; 130 in March 2013; and 30 on July 11, 2013, when the depot was transferred from CMA to TEAD.

During the 12-month period in which the zero RIR was achieved, DCD employees completed the delivery of thousands of barrels of chemical agent-contaminated waste materials from storage structures to the Drum Ventilation System Sorting Room located in the storage area. There, workers monitored, sorted and categorized the waste for disposal. The waste was generated over the course of 70 years of chemical weapons storage and disposal at DCD.

With CMA's chemical weapons disposal mission at DCD complete, depot employees were handed the task to clean and monitor all former chemical storage structures to ensure compliance with the depot's Resource Conservation and Recovery Act permits. Employees cleaned and monitored 208 storage igloos and 34 warehouses that had formerly housed chemical agents. During the same period, employees were required to prepare all of the depot's equipment for turn in. Every piece of equipment, from computers to forklifts to modular trailers, was inspected and inventoried.

The activities were a significant change from the work the employees were accustomed to prior to stockpile elimination. And with change came added risk. Leadership invested early on in work activities involving lifting and moving equipment.

DCD experienced an initial increase in its RIR as it transitioned from chemical weapons storage operations to closure operations, but the safety culture embraced by employees enabled them to identify new risks and react quickly. Individuals donned personal protective equipment even when moving simple things like pallets because there are preservatives in the wood that can cause skin irritation. Employees and leadership learned that just as they needed PPE for chemical operations, they needed it for standard operations. As the months rolled by without a recordable injury, employees began to see that the goal of achieving a zero RIR was within reach. Leadership emphasized to the workforce that nothing they were doing was worth the risk of life or limb. It was a continual focus on safety and never letting down their guard.

While DCD employees spent the last year preparing for closure following completion of the stockpile destruction mission there, the 121 employees at BGCA stored and managed a chemical weapons stockpile comprised of 523 tons of weaponized chemical agent. BGCA employees are responsible for the safe and secure storage of one of the nation's two remaining chemical weapons stockpiles, which are scheduled for destruction under the DoD's Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives program. Among the chemical weapons in the custody of BGCA are the nation's last remaining stockpiled nerve agents.

BGCA employees routinely monitor the chemical storage igloos using Real Time Analytical Platforms — vehicles equipped with chemical agent monitoring equipment — to check for leaking munitions. When required, BGCA employees conduct leaker isolation and overpack operations inside the storage igloos. Additionally, the activity operates its own warehouse and maintenance facility where PPE is cleaned, inspected and repaired. The activity also maintains its own self-contained breathing apparatuses.

The Blue Grass stockpile will be destroyed by ACWA's Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant, which is under construction. BGCA employees will perform many tasks in support of the destruction effort, and training on unique equipment to be used for M55 rocket separation operations is now underway. Likewise, facilities in the chemical weapons storage area are being upgraded to prepare for increased use.

With all the construction going on, mitigating risk and safely executing the many tasks necessary to the unit's mission can only be accomplished by a professional workforce. Employees are full partners with leadership in the safety process. An employee safety committee meets regularly to discuss employee safety concerns and elevate issues and recommendations to leadership. Additionally, safety suggestion boxes are placed in various locations in the activity operations area. The boxes generate excellent suggestions that are individually logged and tracked.

The cross-pollination of safety ideas among various CMA elements was one of the factors that enabled their workforces to excel. For employees and leadership at both DCD and BGCA, their safety achievement can be attributed to teamwork.

MAKE SURE IT'S A 'REAL' FIRE

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 TIMOTHY ESQUIBEL
C Company, 1-171st General Support Aviation Battalion
Santa Fe, N.M.

Emergency procedures are in place for a reason, and aviators know how important it is to run the checklist in order to make the right decision. One day we arrived at the Corpus Christi Army Depot, Texas, to pick up a UH-60. We located the aircraft and met with the maintenance staff to review the depot work that had been done. There was plenty of time left in the day to review the log books and the aircraft, so I and two crew chiefs, who had come along with us, conducted a preflight inspection.

The aircraft appeared in good condition. We felt the depot staff had done a great job preparing the Black Hawk and they were eager for us to accept ownership. After we completed the preflight and logbook check, we advised CCAD that we would make our first test flight the following morning.

We arrived at CCAD the next morning and immediately began another preflight inspection. We felt the thorough preflight and preventive maintenance daily went above the standard and was more than adequate for the flight, considering we inspected the entire aircraft twice on consecutive days. At that point, our maintenance test pilot was prepared for the initial flight and the crew was comfortable with the aircraft.

We had the aircraft towed to the ramp and began developing a flight plan that would include a flight over the test flight area where the maintenance officer would conduct his maintenance checks. The MTP and I looked over the route; it called for us to depart, fly low over the edge of the ocean and then out toward the edge of an island. From there, we would climb to 10,000 feet above ground level and begin a pattern to accomplish all the checks needed to ensure the Black Hawk was ready to be transferred to our unit.

At that point, we all sat down and conducted a thorough crew brief discussing the route, weather, all tests to be performed, emergency procedures and comfort level of each crew member. This was important considering none of us had flown this helicopter before and it was coming out of the depot. However, the entire crew was comfortable with all that we had done to prepare for the test flight and the follow-on flight back to Santa Fe, N.M.

We proceeded to the UH-60 and began an engine run-up, which was smooth and uneventful. We conducted all necessary ground checks and waited for departure clearance. At that point, I took the controls and we departed CCAD for the test flight area. The en route flight was smooth and we began to feel comfortable with the performance of the helicopter.

Once we arrived in the test flight area, we started a climb to 10,000 feet AGL, and all indications and instruments were normal. The MTP reached up to retard the power control lever on the No. 2 engine, and the master fire warning light came on. The crew chief in the back announced the fire light from his position. I immediately visually confirmed the light and announced to the crew in the back, "Confirm we have a fire."

The first thing that went through my mind was the warning written with this type of EP: "Confirm you have and actual fire before you shut down an engine." I looked up and confirmed the No. 2 T-handle was red, indicating a fire. At that point, the crew chief announced, "I confirm we do have a fire."

We began an immediate decent in an S pattern to visually look for smoke. We could not see any smoke; however, the fire light still indicated a fire. The MTP took the controls and began communicating with the tower, advising them we had indications of a fire. As we descended rapidly, the No. 2 engine was indicating normal operations. Within seconds of discussing the situation, the MTP and I decided to not shut down the No. 2 engine. At that moment the crew chief said we may not have a fire. We did not shut down the No. 2 engine because it was indicating normal activity and functioning properly and the fact the crew chief, at the last second, advised we may not have a fire.

The fire department and rescue crews were waiting when we landed safely back at CCAD. After shutting down and looking over the No. 2 engine, we discovered a label wrapped around a fuel drain line was too close to the engine and had caught fire and burned. The label was adjacent to the fire detection sensor which kept the fire warning light illuminated. The engine was not on fire, but the label did incinerate. The fuel line was replaced and the following day we had a successful flight.

This incident reinforced what we were taught during training: When you have a situation, remember your training and follow the checklists. We've heard that before, but, trust me, it works.

KNOWLEDGE
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ACCIDENT BRIEFS

AVIATION

MQ-1C
Class A

The contractor-operated system crashed short of the runway after it experienced loss of fuel rail pressure and a FADEC degradation during flight. The crew initiated emergency procedures for return to base, but the system suffered engine failure due to continued loss of fuel pressure.

UV-20A
Class C

The aircraft sustained significant damage after crashing into a tree line on takeoff during single-pilot training.

GROUND

FIRE
Class A

A Soldier died from burn injuries suffered in a fuel point fire. The Soldier was escorting a fuel truck to a fuel pump when it hit the pump and a fire erupted, followed by subsequent explosions.

PERSONNEL INJURY
Class A

A Soldier drowned while swimming in a lake. Bystanders tired to help the Soldier but could not reach him.

A Soldier died after the boat he was in capsized. The Soldier, along with two other Soldiers and an 11-year-old dependent, were all wearing personal flotation devices.

A Soldier was killed while participating in a recreational parachute jump with a skydiving club. He reportedly struck his head on the tail section of the aircraft as he exited.

A Soldier died due to autoerotic asphyxiation.

A Soldier drowned while swimming with fellow Soldiers who were practicing for a sapper competition.

A Soldier drowned after he fell from a friend's houseboat. Alcohol was reported as a contributing factor.

A Soldier died while handling his .40-caliber handgun. He was showing the privately owned weapon to fellow Soldiers when it discharged and the round struck him in the head.

DRIVING

PMV-4
Class A

A Soldier died after his vehicle crossed the centerline in a curve, left the road, struck an embankment and overturned multiple times. He was not wearing a seat belt and was ejected from the vehicle.

PMV-2
Class A

A Soldier died after he rode over gravel on a rural road and slid into a guardrail. The Soldier was wearing a helmet.

A Soldier was killed when an SUV pulled into his path of travel. The Soldier was wearing a helmet.

A Soldier died when he lost control of his motorcycle, went up an embankment and struck a light pole. Other motorists reported speed as a factor in the accident.

A Soldier died when he lost control of his motorcycle in a right-hand turn at a high rate of speed, left the road and struck a culvert.

A Soldier was killed when a vehicle entered his lane on a major highway, causing him to swerve and lose control of his motorcycle.

A Soldier was killed when he lost control of his motorcycle, fell to the road and was struck by a rider following him. The other rider then crashed.

ATV

Class A

A Soldier died and another was injured when their ATV, which they were riding on a local highway, left the road and struck a tree. Alcohol and failure to wear helmets were reported as contributing factors.